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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT TUESDAY, February 21, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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Canned foods take an important place on the family dinner table at this time of year. So no wonder a good many questions about canned foods are appearing in the mailbag. This week's mail brought several which are to have first attention today.

Here's one from a farm homemaker who has had a serious disappointment. She writes: "Most of the vegetables I canned last summer and counted on for my family's winter meals have spoiled. I can't understand why because I followed the directions in the Department of Agriculture home-canning bulletin every step of the way. I was particularly careful about the time of processing and the pressure. Can you suggest any reason for the spoilage?"

Answer: The trouble may be the gauge on your pressure cooker. If the gauge is out of order, the foods may not get enough heat to sterilize them. Arnold Barager of the Nebraska Experiment Station checked many pressure cookers owned by Nebraska homemakers and found three-quarters of the gauges inaccurate. Both new and old gauges were faulty. He found that some gauges are not right when the canner leaves the factory or store, and other gauges develop errors during use. If the pointer of the gauge does not rest on the zero mark, you can be sure the gauge is wrong. But other faults don't show except by a pressure test. Mr. Barager advises having your pressure gauge checked at the beginning of each canning season. The Nebraska State Experiment Station gives this service if you mail the gauge to them. Some manufacturers of pressure cookers also will check the gauge.

Now to go on to the second question. It brings up the subject of vitamins in canned foods. A listener asks: "Why are canned fruits and tomatoes so much richer in vitamin C than canned vegetables?"

Answer: The acid in the fruits and tomatoes helps save the vitamin C which otherwise would be destroyed by cooking. So during cooking or canning non-acid foods like vegetables lose much of the vitamin C they naturally contain, but the acid foods like fruits and tomatoes keep much of theirs.

Here's question number three. It's from another homemaker. She wants to know about the juice on canned vegetables. She says: "I never can understand why all the recipes nowadays advise saving the juice on canned vegetables. As far as I can see, this is nothing but salted cooking water."

Unfortunately, you can't "see" food values. Vitamins and minerals in foods aren't visible, but they're very important just the same. Those that are

soluble in water dissolve into the cooking water. The Massachusetts Experiment Station reports that "large quantities of the water-soluble vitamins B, C, and G dissolve in the cooking water of fruits and vegetables and are lost unless this cooking water is utilized."

Question number four is about the vitamins in frozen vegetables: "Does freezing destroy the vitamins in food?"

Answer: No, indeed. All the investigations of frozen foods show that there is practically no loss of any of the vitamins even after long storage at zero degrees Fahrenheit or below. But defrosting or thawing frozen fruits and vegetables destroys vitamin C very rapidly. To save this vitamin, drop solidly frozen vegetables into boiling water without defrosting first.

Now to answer the young homemaker who writes for directions for French-frying potatoes in lard: At the Iowa Station workers have recently finished a long study of cooking with lard. In the course of this study, they worked out some very careful directions for French fried potatoes. They say to peel medium-sized potatoes, and then cut them in eighths lengthwise--or in strips about a quarter of an inch across. Soak the potatoes for 2 hours in salted water.(A tablespoon of salt to each cup of water.) Drain the potatoes and wipe them with a cloth. They will be limp from soaking in salt water, but will become crisp as they fry and need no salting afterwards. To fry, first heat the lard to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. (Every good cook nowadays fries with a thermometer, you know.) Put about a cup of potatoes into the frying basket and lower the basket into the hot lard slowly so the fat won't spatter. Cook the potatoes about 3 minutes--or until they are lightly browned, stirring them occasionally with a fork so they will fry evenly. Lift out the basket and lay the fried potatoes on unglazed paper which will absorb excess fat. Put another cupful of potato slices in the basket to fry. And so on.

The chief points for success in French frying are: first, the 2-hour soaking in salt water; second, drying the potatoes thoroughly before they go into the fat; third, having the fat at just the right temperature; fourth, putting in only a few at a time; and, last, cooking just until they are a light brown.

The Iowa workers say that moisture added to lard makes it become rancid more quickly than it otherwise would. So potatoes going in to fry should have all moisture wiped from their surface. This also helps prevent the spattering that occurs when moisture comes in contact with the heated lard.

That concludes the questions today. More next Tuesday.

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